

Missionary Folkers Sunday School

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Preacher: Seth Folkers

[0 : 0 0] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

and 30, so we end about quarter past.

Okay. Ephesians chapter 4 and verses 7 through 16. I'll go ahead and read that and then we'll begin.

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.

[2 : 0 8] Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things.

And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

But speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joins together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, I thank you for all of your grace towards us. Lord, I thank you that we can be here this morning. Lord, I'm thankful for this church that continues to serve you here in this area.

[3 : 3 6] Lord, I'm thankful to be able to be with them again after all these years and to see ones who are still here faithfully serving you. And Father, I pray that your hand of blessing would be upon our time here this morning.

I pray that you would be glorified in it. Father, help me to speak as your oracles. And I pray, Father, that what I share would be edifying to your people or that it would be used by you in their lives to accomplish that which you know each one needs.

And so we just look unto you, Father, we pray just for your blessing upon the ministry of your word this morning. And I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm just going to work through this passage, giving some explanations of it.

As we look at the main theme of this passage, it's really the, it centers really on verse 11 and 12, verses 11 and 12 here, and how the Lord Jesus gave these gifted men to the church for a particular purpose.

And so that's really, again, what the passage revolves around is these gifts of the Lord to His church. Beginning in verse 7, He says, But unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

[5 : 00] And so to, in fact, if we look at the verses just before that, He's been talking about the unity that we have in the Spirit. And how there's, He gives this sevenfold unity.

In verses 4 through 6, there's one body, one Spirit, etc. And so there's this unity that we have in Christ. But then also, each one of us individually is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

And so, we each one receive spiritual gifting from the Lord. And that as we go on, we'll see how that spiritual gifting that we are given is for the purpose of building one another up spiritually, as well as seeing the church built up.

In fact, that's the result. As we build one another up, the church also is built up. And so, we all receive, every one of us receives that grace, that grace speaks of the fact of something that's freely given, of a gift that's freely given to us.

And then in verse 8, He says, Wherefore He saith, and so now He's, Paul, the Apostle Paul here is about to quote a passage in Psalm 68. Psalm 68, 18.

[6 : 18] And He's going to show how that ties into this truth about the spiritual gifting that we've all received. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

And so, as Paul refers back to this, now what is this verse talking about? Again, the quote is, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

If you would turn there with me for just a moment to Psalm 68, 18. We'll read that in its context. Psalm 68, verses, I'll read verses 17 through 19.

In fact, could I ask someone to read that? Psalm 68, verses 17 through 19. If you are there in your Bible, could someone read that for us?

I'm sorry. That might be, Is that Psalm? Yes.

[7 : 52] 68, verses 17 through 19. Thank you.

Thank you. And so, as we look there at verse 18, He's speaking to someone. He says, Thou hast ascended on high. Thou hast led captivity captive.

And who is He speaking to? In the context, I think, that there's, there's no one else really in the context He would be addressing besides God Himself. And yet, at the same time, He says, He speaks of God in the third person, but it seems He also is addressing God in the second person here.

Okay, and that's important as we continue on to see what Paul is saying in the verses that follow. And so, he says, Thou hast ascended on high. Thou hast led captivity captive. Thou hast received gifts for men.

Now, what does this lead captivity captive mean? I don't know if it's a common view or where I got it exactly, but when I was young, I used to think that meant that He had led those who were held captive in paradise, that He had led them out of paradise.

[9 : 27] But as I studied it more, I realized what it's really saying is that He led those who had held them captive, He led them captive. And there's another place in the Old Testament where this phrase is used.

It's in the song of Deborah and Barak in Judges. And it says, there as Deborah's singing and she speaks of how Barak had led their captivity captive. And so, again, it's that same idea that those who had held them in bondage, now the tables are turned and they're being led captive.

And that's exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ did as He conquered Satan. He led captivity captive. And so, the idea here is as kings in those days would have a victory, they would have this triumphal march, this victory celebration where they would parade through the city and they would, the captives that they had brought back from the war, they would be paraded along so everyone could see.

And of course, if it's kings and those who used to be great men from the enemies, of course, that even shows much greater victory if you're leading kings behind you, if you're leading generals that you've defeated behind you in this march, and also, then the victor of that battle, he would be distributing gifts, spoils from the war to the people as he marched along.

And so, that seems to be the idea here is when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive. He was victorious over the enemy and those who held us in bondage, they are now defeated.

[11 : 05] And he gave gifts unto men. And so, again, that idea of a triumphal march, of a victory celebration. Now, when we turn back with me to Ephesians chapter 4, the point that Paul is really focusing on here is that gave gifts unto men and how that relates to Jesus' ascension up into heaven in victory.

And so, and then he ties that back to Psalm 68. And so, showing how Psalm 68 is really a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ ascending up to heaven in victory, and then as he ascends up, as he takes that place of victory, he gives gifts unto men.

And as he, of course, those gifts come to us through the Holy Spirit. And Jesus had promised that when he ascended to heaven and he sat down at the Father's right hand that he would send the Holy Spirit.

And that's what we see happen on the day of Pentecost. And that's how each one of us now, as we receive the Holy Spirit, he also gives us those spiritual gifts. And so, in verses 9 and 10, now the Apostle Paul is showing how is it that he takes this as a prophecy of Christ.

In verse 9, now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? And I believe the point he's making has to be understood this way, that we realize Psalm 68.18 is addressing God.

[12 : 39] And so, if he's ascending, if he's going up, that means he must have first come down because God's place is already in heaven. And so, he asks the question, so then who is it that came down?

As you go on to verse 10, he that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things. So, the one who descended, which is the Lord Jesus Christ, is the same one then that must be ascending in these verses.

And he ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things. Now, in verse 9, sometimes, again, we've taken that descended into the lower parts of the earth.

We've taken that as referring to maybe to hell or something of that nature. But actually, that is one possible way grammatically that you could take it. But I believe in the context, it shows us we should take it a different way, which is the lower parts refers to the earth.

For example, if we're coming to Maine in the winter, I think we might say, I'm taking a trip to the cold northern region of Maine. Okay, now it doesn't necessarily mean that I'm saying a particular part of Maine, but I'm referring to Maine as a cold northern region.

[13 : 55] You understand what I'm saying there? Now, maybe in Cameroon we say, I'm going to the humid, to the humid, or maybe let's just say, I'm going to the humid region of Africa.

Okay, maybe I'm referring to all of Africa. Now, not all of Africa is here, but you get what I'm saying, that of the earth does not necessarily mean that the lower parts are a particular place inside the earth, but it's simply a way to refer to the earth because he's coming down from heaven to the lower parts, which is the earth.

Okay, so, Jesus descended to the lower parts, that's the earth, and now, he ascended up on high. And so, as he ascended up, he gave this promise of the Holy Spirit, and he gave, he gave these gifts through the Spirit.

And then in verse 11, now he goes on to say, what are some of those gifts that he's given? And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.

And again, the idea here is not that he gave to some apostles, maybe he gave this church apostles, he gave that church evangelists, or teachers, the idea is some of those that he gave are apostles, some of them are prophets, etc.

[15 : 13] And in this verse, really what we see is these men themselves, these gifted men, they are Christ's gifts to the church. They've received this spiritual gifting, a leadership gift through the Holy Spirit, and now they are Christ's gifts to his church.

And so, now the apostles and prophets, how is it that they are Christ's gift to the church? Of course, today, we don't have apostles and prophets in the same sense as they did back then.

perhaps there's a sense in which a missionary is an apostle, but definitely not like the twelve apostles. I think there's a sense in which the prophetic gift is exercised today, but in the sense of declaring a message from God that comes from his word, not new revelation.

but just a couple chapters earlier, Paul says that we're built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. And they continue to minister to the church today through the word of God because the whole New Testament, really the whole Bible that we have, came to us through the apostles and prophets.

And so, through that, they continue to build us up and to edify us even today, and so he gave the apostles first, he gave the prophets prophets that followed with them. And then he gave evangelists, and that would be someone whose focus is on the gospel.

[16 : 36] The word evangelist itself is related to the Greek word for gospel. It really means like a gospeler. And so it's someone that it seems like they will often be those who are going preaching the gospel in places where the gospel has not yet gone.

But in general, they're gifted by God for declaring the gospel. And some will even expand that, probably correctly, to say even declaring the gospel to the saints as well.

But that's their focus is on the gospel. And then we have the pastors and teachers. And that's, of course, for each church, the local ministry that God has given, Jesus gave those shepherds and those teachers for each local church.

And that's his desire for each local church. And so as he gave us these gifted men, what is their purpose? In verse 12, we see, for the perfecting of the saints.

That word perfecting has the idea of to equip us. And one place it's even translated mend, where they were mending their nets. And so it's so that to help us when we get maybe a bit, as we're out serving the Lord and we get a bit torn up, we get a little bit, we're needing some mending, we're needing some healing.

[17 : 54] God has given us these pastors and teachers and these others that are supposed to be able to help to get us back together again, help meet those spiritual needs, to equip us, to give us the tools that we need to be able to go out there and to serve the Lord.

So He's given us those, our spiritual leaders, our pastors and our teachers to help perfect us, to equip us, to mend us.

And for the perfecting of the saints, of course, I believe all of you would realize that all of us who are saved here today, we are saints. Saints are not some special group of people.

And sometimes we might not feel like we're saints, but that's what the Word of God calls us. If we're saved, we are saints. We're holy. We're set apart to God. And so, saints is just a word speaking of the believers, the normal church members.

For the perfecting of the saints, and now this next one, for the work of the ministry, is not a second purpose for why Christ gave those teachers, but rather that's the result of the first one.

[19 : 02] For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry. Why do the saints need to be perfected? It's unto the work of the ministry. God's purpose is not that the pastors and the leaders of the church, not that they themselves should be the ones doing all the work of the ministry, but rather, His desire is every one of us.

We're all supposed to be involved in doing the work of the ministry. And their job is rather to equip us to do the work of the ministry. When it says the ministry, we think, okay, the ministry, that means like being a pastor or something like that.

But really, the sense is the work of ministering. And the work of ministering is something that we're all supposed to be involved in. We can all minister to one another.

It might be through hospitality. It might be through cleaning the church. It might be through knocking on doors or just going and talking to your neighbor and inviting them to church. It can be through the, there are so many different ways, really.

It can be through prayer as you, maybe through visiting someone who's in the hospital. Those are all things that it's not just the pastor who can do those things. God calls all of us as members of this body that we're supposed to all be looking for those opportunities to minister to one another, to serve one another, and to be a blessing to one another.

[20 : 26] And so, the pastor's job then is to perfect us to equip us so that we all can be involved in this work of ministering. And then there's another result that follows after that.

For the edifying of the body of Christ. And so, the body of Christ, that word edifying means building up. And so, the body of Christ is built up as we're all ministering one to another.

As there's that love that is being communicated from one to another as we're all serving one another, the body of Christ will be built up. Spiritually, we will all be built up together in Christ.

And really, the result normally also will be numerically that the Lord is going to add more people to the church. As we're all ministering to each other like that, there's going to be a spirit in the church that's going to draw others as well and will attract them to want to be part of that fellowship.

And then in verse 13, we see how, again, we see something of the purpose here. Till we all come in the, I'm sorry, this is really when, how long these will continue to function.

[21 : 39] Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

And so, that day will come when we see Christ and we become like Him. We see Him as He is. And that day, we'll reach that perfect man.

The church will be that the body of Christ, the final components will enter in. The last people will be saved, will be added to that body of Christ.

And we'll reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. And so, until that day comes when we all reach that perfect unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, until that day, we need the ministry of the pastors and the teachers that God has given to us.

And these others, the apostles and prophets through the Word of God and the evangelists, we need their ministry. Then in verse 14, we see one other reason for why Christ gave them.

[22 : 41] Besides the perfecting of the saints, there's also a danger to be avoided. That we henceforth be no more children. And so, God doesn't want us to be, Jesus doesn't want us to be gullible.

He doesn't want us to be like, of course, we all know how you can tell your children so many things and we often have fun with that. And at first, they're quick to believe you because children are gullible.

But spiritually also, God's people are often gullible. And God has given us these spiritual leaders to help to train us in the Word of God so that we are not gullible.

So we're not easily led away with different false teachings. Even coming back to the U.S. this time, I've had some close relatives, some close friends that I found out have been led away into different kinds of false teachings.

And it's really been a disappointment to me to see that. But in our own country, there are so many false teachings around. And there are so many, as it says here, that lie in wait to deceive.

[23 : 56] They really are, they're dishonest. And they come and they handle the Scriptures dishonestly. I honestly don't understand how it is that someone's conscience can be so hard that they can feel free to come to the Word of God and twist it around the way some of them do.

JWs are one example. So very dishonest with the Word of God. I'm sure there are individuals in the JWs that are not that way. They are sincere.

But their leadership has been so dishonest. Even their own translation that they've made and they've really been so dishonest with the Greek. If you know the original Greek and you compare their translation, you'll see how they just twisted things around intentionally.

And God doesn't want us, the Lord Jesus doesn't want us to be like children that we're just gullible, we're like, we're out on the sea and a ship and as one wave comes we're tossed this way and we're tossed that way.

But we're to, as He gives us godly shepherds who study the Word of God, who teach us the Word of God, we need to pay attention because some of these people have been in church a long time and they're still led astray.

[25 : 04] And maybe it's because they weren't really paying attention to what was being taught and really internalizing it. And so we need to really internalize that teaching so that we know the Word of God.

And then verse, I'll just wrap up here, verses 15 and 16. Instead of being led astray like that, but speaking the truth in love. That word speaking the truth, it's one word in Greek.

We could translate it as truthing if that was a word in English. Truthing in love, the idea is just, there's just truth that's coming out. And as we truth one another in love, as we speak truth, that we may grow up into Him in all things because it's the truth that will help us to grow up together into Christ.

Now, who is the head? From whom the whole body, and I'm going to skip down, this next verse is a lengthy verse, but I want you to get the core of the verse.

From whom the whole body maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. And there's a part in between there that helps explain the way that's working.

[26 : 10] But the main subject here is the whole body, and the verb is maketh increase. So from whom the whole body maketh increase of the body. Again, we see that idea that all of us, we all have a part to play.

We're all to be working together to minister to one another. And it's through, it's through the Lord Jesus Christ who's working in us. And as He works in us, as He gives us these gifts, as we use them for the benefit of the church, that the whole body makes increase of the body unto the edifying, the building up of itself in love.

And so that is God's desire, that's His plan for the church, that we should just, that truth and love should be pouring forth from us towards one another, and that each one of us, just like the members of our physical body, we're members of a spiritual body, and we're, my, if my, if my nose has an itch, my hand is ready to help it.

If, I'm sure I could give so many more ways that, it's amazing the way the body functions. My wife and I were watching a film on the, on the airplanes we were coming back about the different organs and the way they communicate with each other.

I never knew how even like the kidney is just, it, the way it communicates with so many other organs in the body and that they're all so interrelated and much of this they're just discovering the way they communicate with each other and the members of our physical body, they minister to one another and spiritually too, we need to be communicating, we need to be lovingly speaking the truth to one another so that we can help one another to grow up in Christ.

[27 : 46] Let's go ahead and pray.